

PEOPLE and THINGS: By ATTICUS

SIR EDWIN PLOWDEN should be the happiest of mortals. This short, donish man is a Civil Servant without the limitations of the Civil Service either on salary rates or on independence; as chairman of the Atomic Energy Authority he has been virtually immune from public or parliamentary criticism.



SIR EDWIN PLOWDEN

criticism pouring down from the back benches. Sir Edwin, however, can look forward with equanimity to the forthcoming election in the House of Commons on atomic expenditure—which will rise by £14 million this year to £54 million.

Sir Edwin deserves at least part of the credit for this atmosphere of energetic and frictionless achievement; he is adept at the game of "administrative jiu-jitsu," which consists of persuading colleagues to work with him rather than against him.

Despite the official barrier that hampers Anglo-American co-operation he maintains a warm friendship with Admiral Lewis Strauss, his opposite number in Washington.

Civil Meteor

Sir Edwin's rise has been meteoric. In 1931, armed with a Cambridge B.A. in economics, he began to sell telephones at £3 a week. In 1938 he became a director of Tennants, the City merchants; and in 1947, after a war spent in Whitehall, he became Chief Planning Officer at the Treasury.

One of his first jobs was to prepare an estimate of what would happen to this country if the dollars ran out and Marshall Aid were not available. The answer was "a concentration camp existence for everyone." Now he has one of the most important roles in the struggle to make us self-reliant.

Ambassador and Target

SIR CHARLES PEAKE, our Ambassador in Athens, is an eminently adaptable man. At an age when most men are content to sit behind a desk or stand beside a buffet, Sir Charles has taken part in

Jugoslav partisan dances and mastered the difficult art of music riding.

It is just as well that resilience is his forte, for during his distinguished career he has been the target of more verbal and physical violence than comes to most diplomats. In Chicago he was hit by rotten eggs aimed at Lord Halifax. In Belgrade his credentials were seized and stamped upon by an exuberant militiaman. For a time during the last war he had the supremely uncomfortable task of acting as the buffer between General De Gaulle and Sir Winston Churchill. Now his Embassy in Athens is often attacked by angry rioters.

Sir Charles has never lost his habitual sang-froid and I am sure that he now takes a less catastrophic view of the current American pronouncements on the Cyprus question than many people in this country. He was General Eisenhower's political liaison officer at S.H.A.E.F. for eighteen months and he knows from experience that unity will eventually prevail.

Meritorious Orders

AN exhibition which the Queen's Mother did not have time to see during her brief visit to Paris was that of medals, orders and decorations at the Hotel de la Monnaie on the Quai Conti.

I hear that the British contribution to this is particularly imposing. Both Garter and Thistle robes are on view, by special permission of the Queen, and an adroit selection of individual decorations has been contributed by people well known to the French public. I hear that, for instance, is lending his O.M., Mr. Henry Moore his C.H., and Viscount de L'Isle and Dudley his V.C.

The severe salons of the house in question do not, I dare say, lend themselves to the *tableau vivant*; but I cannot help regretting that no attempt was made to humanise these desirable baubles yet one step further, and to show Mr. Elliot inditing a line of verse, Mr. Moore kneading elmwood, and Lord de L'Isle leading or, it might be, repelling a charge.

Off to Addis Ababa

NONE of our peripatetic Ministers has yet penetrated the mountain fastnesses of Ethiopia; and now I am glad to hear that one of Mr. Selwyn Lloyd's principal lieutenants at the Foreign Office, Douglas Dodds-Parker, will soon repair this omission.

Ever since he served on the Sudan-Ethiopian border during the Itelian campaign of conquest, that part of the world has held a strong grip on Mr.

Dodds-Parker's conscious and subconscious mind.

After leaving the Sudan political service he still used to dream from time to time that he was back on the Abyssinian border. "Well, Dodds-Parker," his dinner colleagues would say, "it's nice to have you back. We're all going on leave, so you can take over."

Two months ago this dream was, in part, fulfilled when he flew out to Khartoum to represent this country at the Sudanese Independence Day celebrations. All his old colleagues had departed. He was the last representative of the old order in the whole country.

Einstein's Last Work

THE Princeton University Press has just published the final revised edition of Albert Einstein's "Meaning of Relativity." In this volume Einstein presents his "simplified" mathematical Unified Field Theory.

The great scientist spent his last years working on this attempt to reconcile relativity and quantum theory. If he did succeed in reconciling these two fundamentally irreconcilable theories, many scholars believe that this volume will rank as the greatest of all achievements of the human intellect.

Was he successful? It is quite possible that no one will ever know; for even those who can follow the argument cannot discover any discernible method of checking the result by experiment or observation.

The Keeper—

I AM always reassured when I catch a glimpse of Mr. Harry Pollitt, the leader of the British Communist Party. He looks like an improvident grocer in need of a loan from a reluctant bank manager; and he altogether lacks that air of proletarian gravitas that distinguishes so many Communist leaders of other lands.

One honour, however, cannot be denied Mr. Pollitt. He is the party guardian of many of the holy places of Communism. It was in London that Karl Marx wrote his major works. It was in London that Stalin first saw Lenin and it was in London that Lenin first met Trotsky. In an East End church hall Lenin's faction first gained the ascendancy over the Russian Socialist *émigré* movement—by keeping the meeting going so long that many of the opposition delegates got bored and drifted away.

—of Communist Shrines

In Highgate Cemetery last week I watched Mr. Pollitt fulfilling his ceremonial duty as

keeper of the shrines when he unveiled a massive new memorial over Karl Marx's grave. The diplomatic representatives of the Iron Curtain countries brought ornate wreaths in sleek American cars, and a Chinaman sat on Herbert Spencer's gravestone filming the ceremony with a German camera.

The Marx family, which has hitherto blocked any move to build a monument, was represented by two great-grandsons, Robert and Frederic Longuet, who had come over from Paris. Robert who is a journalist, has spent much of his life in the

United States. So far as he knows, no member of the first family of communism has ever visited the Soviet Union.

Hall-Marked

OXFORD STREET has a character in its character in recent years, and one of the last remnants of its old fastidious self was the headquarters, at No. 158, of Messrs. Mappin & Webb, the Queen's silversmiths. Punctually at one o'clock yesterday afternoon the door closed for the last time on the discreet interior and the massive, unshowy stock was taken out of the windows. The street had gone too far downhill, it

was felt, from Mappin's point of view, since their cash-bought boys wore Blon suits and the staff came to work by horse-bus. (Miss Wilkins, the senior assistant, joined the shop when the windows were still draped with purple velvet and many neighbours also bore the Royal Arms.)

It was the general manager, Mr. Frank Russell, who described the trouble to me in one memorable phrase. "We really couldn't go on here," he said. "Almost every day we have to wipe ice-cream off our windows."

Mappin's hope before long to supplement their City and Regent Street branches with a

new shop "in Knightsbridge or Kensington"—where ice-cream eating is an indoor sport.

Football Fighter

IN trade-union circles Mr. James Guthrie is unique. As the chairman of the Association Football Players and Trainers Union he leads the only sporting trade union that exists in the world. At the moment he is in the middle of hectic negotiations for extra pay for those playing extra football and televised football matches.

His union claims 90 per cent. of the allegiance of 7,000 registered professional football players in this country, but the playing life of the average professional is only seven years and 30 per cent. change their club every year. "It is difficult to organise under these conditions," he told me in a moment of classic understatement.

By instinct this burly Scot is a fighter—some would call him cussed—and an orator. His speech at last year's Trades Union Congress brought the delegates to their feet. Now he must try to soften many more hearts, for football players have lost much ground in the post-war rush of wage increases. A £15 weekly pay-pocket—the maximum allowed—is not much for an international star in these inflated times.

The Foyle Laureate

THAT Mr. Laurie Lee should have been awarded the Foyle Poetry Prize leads me to believe that fundamentally there is justice in such matters. For Mr. Lee, unlike most of our poets, has never been bureaucratized. He has never taught, never lectured, never taken home political orders, never worked (or almost never) in an office—

never sold out, in a word, for respectability.

"I don't know quite how I exist," he says, if questioned on the point. "It's a miracle, really." He has, however, a warm word for the B.B.C., which has often kept him from the extremes of poverty and is next week sending him to Spain.

Mr. Lee is the son of a sea-



LAURIE LEE

faring man who gave up the sea and settled near Stroud. (He has the finest range of tattooed uncles of any man known to me.) When he was twenty he ran away from home, slept in the hedges for four weeks, and eventually got to London. Thence he went to Spain and kept himself alive for a year by playing the violin to anyone who would listen. In 1951 he married a niece of Sir Jacob Epstein and today he lives in Chelsea. He has Mozart's passion for billiards; and with it, as readers of his prize-winning "Mosses-Good Man" will know, a vein of lyrical poetry as remarkable as that of any other generation.

After a Scoop?

"IN the first race at Lingfield on Wednesday afternoon Ambassador's Lapse was chased home by The Editor."—Racing report.